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D R A F T
31 March 1959

MEMORANDUM TO: Ch/G/RR
FROM: SA to Ch/G
SUBJECT: Proposed External Research Project: "Agricultural
Land Utilization in Communist China"

1. In early December 1958, the ERA circulated a draft memo proposing that ORR finance an external research project on agricultural land utilization in Communist China (Incl. 1). As outlined, the project appeared to us to have defects, mainly in the anticipated utility of the research results and in the kind of operational procedure to be employed. The memo did not specifically request GRA comment, and Acting Ch/G asked GG/F present to/our comments orally to M/Ag. This was done by [REDACTED] 25X1A9a in conference with [REDACTED] Subsequently, we understood that the project was shelved because of insufficient funds in ORR.

25X1A9a *in last week*
2. I am now informed that the project has been approved in principle by the AD/RR and has emerged from coordination in the EIC. The latest draft (Incl. 2) was not circulated to the GRA, but was shown informally to [REDACTED] by M/Ag when he dropped by to inquire about the project. On review, the latest version shows some changes from the initial draft. However, the changes do not seem to be directed at the defects which we perceived in the original.

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3. ~~The project itself will neither help us nor hurt us.~~ With rare exception, we undertake work in this field of agricultural intelligence only as requested to do so by M/Ag. Project 61.1717 --an analysis of climatic limitations on grain production and a related study of climatically analogous areas in non-Bloc areas of the Far East-- is such a job (which, in this case, M/Ag hopes to use in developing a basis for evaluating Chinese Communist production claims). However, ~~we have a friend-of-the-court interest in assuring that this project achieves in fact the benefits that are anticipated from it.~~

4. I think it might be a good idea for you to discuss the ^{25X1A9a} project with ^{25X1A9a} [REDACTED] The attached memo from ^{6-6/5} [REDACTED] (Incl. 3) outlines previous history in the matter as it has involved us. The main reservations we have are:

a. The project involves a problem in estimating areas of land use, yet employs no geographers. While we would not question the special qualifications of ^{25X9A6} [REDACTED] we feel that his is not necessarily the best competence for undertaking this kind of project. In any case, we strongly feel that the key personnel should include at least one professional geographer. It is doubtful that the economists will find documentary materials alone to be adequate for the job.

b. The project will result in tabular data grouped by provinces, yet these data will be difficult to correlate properly with other pertinent data--such as those from Project 61.1717--which are grouped by ^{climatic} ~~natural~~ regions of China.

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c. The budget (not attached to latest draft) shows an expenditure of ~~25X1A1a~~ [redacted] for microfilming.

We understand that the travel expenditure is mostly to cover an anticipated procurement trip by ~~25X9A6~~ [redacted] to Taiwan and Hong Kong, and that the microfilming ~~object class~~ ^{fund} cover expenses that will be involved in transporting materials from Washington to California.

There would seem to be something wrong in each of these items.

5. As ~~GG/F~~ ^{25X1A9a} [redacted] implies, there is a body of opinion (not limited to geographers) which holds that other projects than this one may be the most important in resolving problems in intelligence on Chinese agriculture. However, the project ~~would certainly make a worthwhile contribution, if the questions raised above can be answered.~~ ^{has the potential of} ~~would certainly make a useful contribution, if properly planned and programmed.~~

25X1A9a
[redacted]

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